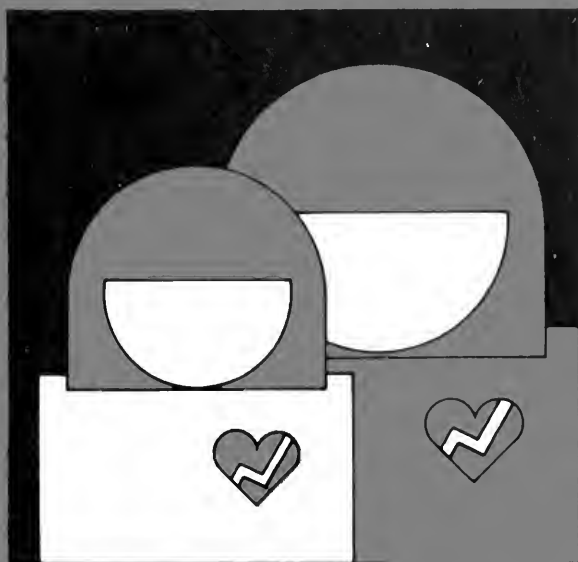


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# CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



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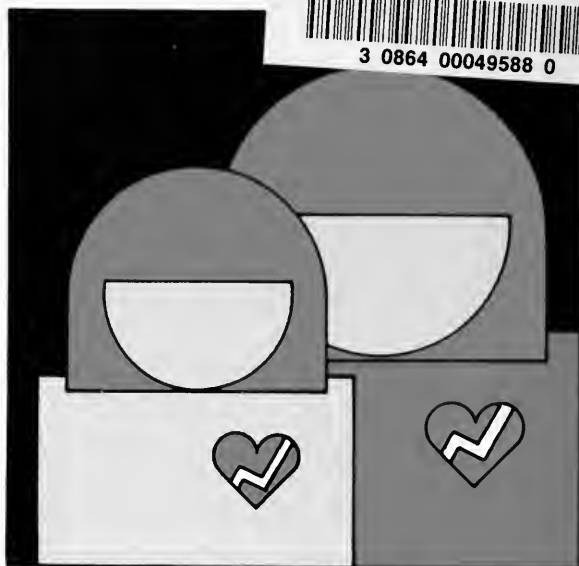
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Being a parent is one of the toughest jobs in the world! Child Protective Services can help. Children deserve to be confident of their own safety and well-being.



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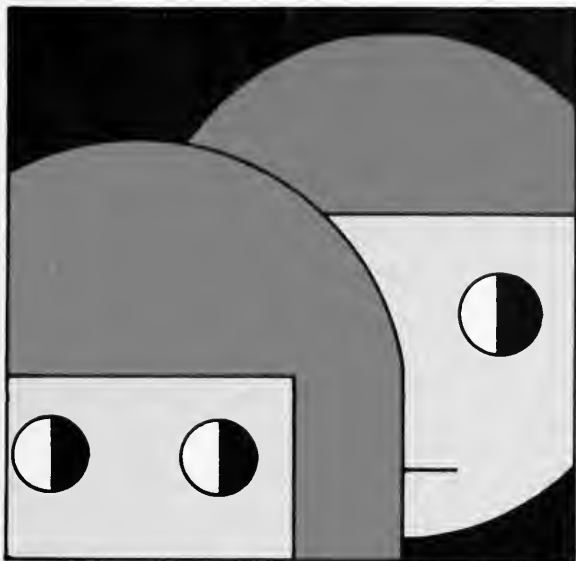


# A NATIONAL TRAGEDY

Each year about one million children are abused or neglected by people who take care of them. As many as 2,000 will die. Then, in a tragic cycle, mistreated children will often grow up to mistreat their own children.

Montana's Child Protective Services Program works to end this cycle. Troubled families are helped through these services which aim to stop child abuse, preserve family life, enhance and protect the child's well-being and educate the public about child abuse and neglect.

This brochure explains how to spot the signs of child abuse and neglect and how to report it.



# RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

Whenever children are abused or neglected, there are two victims: the child and the abuser. Both need help.

## The Child

You may suspect abuse or neglect if a child talks about being harmed or shows one or more of these signs:

- repeated injuries (burns, bruises, breaks)
- untreated medical conditions
- neglected clothes, diet or supervision
- frequent disruptive behavior or unusual shyness, lack of friends
- severe personal problems (promiscuity or prostitution, chemical or alcohol abuse)
- absence from school or other scheduled events
- behavior that's too adult or too young
- pain or itching in genital area
- torn, stained or bloody underclothes

## The Family

Parents who abuse or neglect their children are likely to have a number of these characteristics:

- were unhappy as children
- are socially isolated
- expect too much of the child
- are very critical
- think poorly of themselves
- feel unloved or unappreciated
- are afraid of “spoiling” the child
- are angry or defensive when asked about problems concerning the child or may be uninterested or unresponsive
- can’t logically or convincingly explain the child’s injury
- have severe personal problems (ill health, chemical abuse, alcoholism, unemployment)
- feel very sorry about what they’ve done, but continue to mistreat the child

## NOTE TO VICTIMS

You’re not to blame. Get help for yourself and your family by calling the

**CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE**  
**1-800-332-6100**

or call or write to the agency whose address and phone number are on the back of this brochure.



# SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is a factor in many reported cases of child abuse, yet it is the most under-reported.

Encourage children to tell you if they feel uneasy about someone. When they do talk to you, please listen.

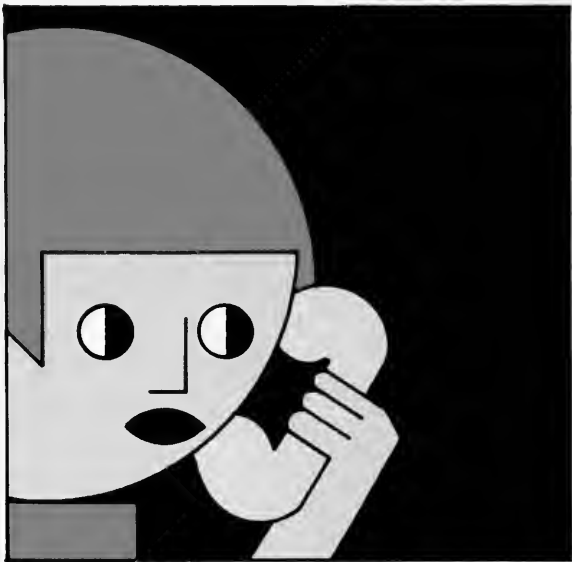
Children who tell you they've been sexually abused are telling the truth. Believe them—they may not have the courage to tell you or anyone else again.

Don't wait for physical proof or improvement. You probably won't see it.

Sexual abusers are often in a position of power over their victims so they rarely need to use force or violence. Physical signs of sexual harm are rare.

Such abusers are usually men and boys who are family members, close friends or neighbors. Rarely are they strangers.

In nine out of ten cases girls bear the brunt of sexual abuse. One in four girls will be sexually abused by the time she's 18. Victims may be as young as several weeks old.



# REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

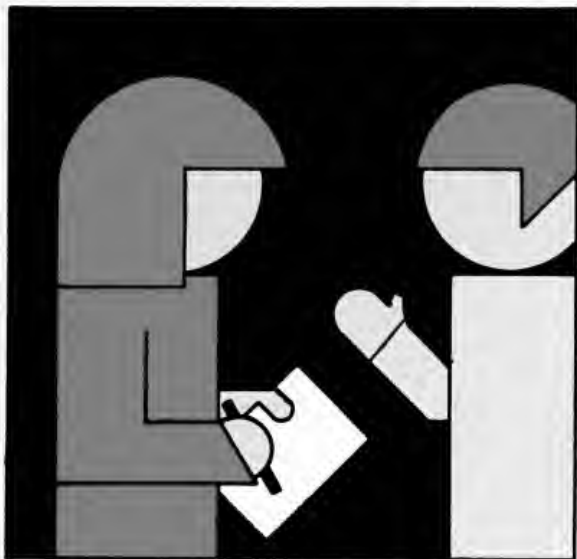
If you know or suspect child abuse or neglect, call the **Child Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-332-6100** immediately. The law protects you from prosecution if you make your report in good faith. You may or may not give your name. If you do, it will not be revealed.

When you report abuse or neglect include the following information:

- name, address and approximate age of the child
- what led you to suspect abuse or neglect
- the nature and extent of the suspected abuse or neglect

Failing to make a report or preventing someone else from reporting makes you civilly liable for the damages you've allowed. Silence allows the cycle of abuse to continue.

Don't wait to report child abuse. Families can fall apart and children may suffer injuries or die when someone fails to report abuse. Families need an outsider—*someone like you*—to get the helping process started.



# TAKING ACTION ON REPORTS

## INVESTIGATION

A social worker will usually schedule a time to meet with the family to talk over the complaint. The worker will write a report and send it to a county attorney. Remember, reporters aren't named.

## PLANNING FOR SERVICES

The social worker, respectful of the values, culture and religion of the child and family, will work with the parents to devise a plan to protect the child from more abuse and neglect. Possible services include:

**Support:** Children's homes and families can become stronger with professional counseling, home attendant services, day care, parent education, income help, involvement of relatives and neighbors and referral to other services.

**Placement:** Children are taken from their families only in emergencies. Relatives or friends often provide shelter. Separation can protect the child and give parents a chance to cool off.

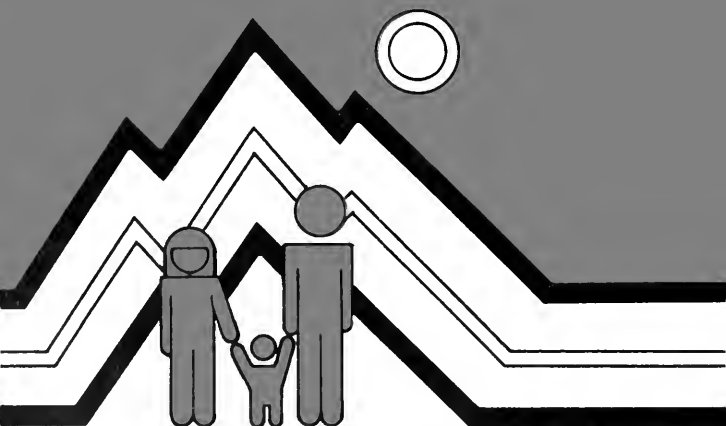
**Medical care:** A doctor will examine the child to take care of any physical problems and to prepare information for possible legal actions.

# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

These services help protect Montana children's legal rights to

- adequate shelter, clothing and food
- safety and supervision
- medical diagnosis and treatment
- education
- an environment which contributes to emotional stability
- be with their natural family
- inherit from their parents
- all constitutional protections

## CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE 1-800-332-6100



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